



Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter
Volume 77 • No. 7 July-August 1995

The Gull

Moss Landing's Best Kept Secret

Exciting new developments follow the restoration of habitat in Monterey's Elkhorn Slough

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Elkhorn Slough, in the central Monterey Bay area, has long been known as a birding "hot-spot" with diverse terrain and juxtaposition of many habitats. The annual Moss Landing Christmas Count is an index of the tremendous diversity of species utilizing this protected area. In 1994, this count ranked first in the nation with a species total of 214.

Since the first conservation land acquisitions in the early 1970's, protected holdings now encompass over 4,000 acres. The establishment of Elkhorn Slough as a National Estuarine Research Reserve in 1980 and the recent designation of Monterey Bay and portions of the Slough as a National Marine Sanctuary have provided impetus for continuing study and conservation in the Elkhorn Slough.

In the Reserve's North Marsh, restoration and a recent acquisition have increased by 125 acres the foraging and roosting habitat for water-associated birds. This area is becoming increasingly important as other habitats in the slough are modified by tidal scour and earthquake-caused subsidence.

A Great Egret and Great Blue Heron colony on the Reserve expanded this year to 90 active nests. Nesting sites are monitored with the use of a tethered helium balloon and camera system. The colony began in 1985 with a single pair of herons. The Great Egret nesting is the first recorded for both Monterey and Santa Cruz counties.

Caspian Terns have reestablished a breeding rookery in Elkhorn Slough after an absence of nearly 15 years. Beginning with several pairs in 1991, the colony grew dramatically, doubling in numbers each year. The increase included several banded birds from an as-yet-unidentified outside colony. In 1994, graduate student Jennifer Parkin, of Moss Landing Marine Laborato-

ries, counted 150 breeding pairs with 187 nests and 321 eggs. The birds are nesting on an island in the restored South Marsh of the Elkhorn Slough Reserve. This colony also attracted a single Black Skimmer, a species which has the potential to breed in the same area. Reserve researchers are managing the vegetation of the island to maintain its attractiveness to the nesting terns.

Snowy Plovers, now federally listed under the Endangered Species Act, have also shown a dramatic increase in breeding success in this central part of Monterey Bay. Fledgling numbers increased from 90 to 125 last year. This increase is attributable to improved habitat on the Slough's Moss Landing Wildlife Area and Red Fox control program at the Salinas River Wildlife area.

These hard-won successes have followed a long-term program of habitat improvement around Elkhorn Slough and continued efforts to stem marsh loss due to tidal scour caused by the historic construction of the Moss Landing Harbor.

Current research in the slough includes work on an expanding Harbor Seal population which has increased to over 200 animals in the last decade. Dr. Jim Harvey and his students from the Moss Landing Marine Laboratories, a field station of the California State Universities, are studying movement patterns of the seals using telemetry, and examining foraging behavior, prey species utilization and pollutant levels in seal blood. Work in the slough watershed includes research by Dr. Andy Thompson, of the University of Santa Clara, who is studying mate selection and foraging ecology of the Plain Titmouse. Graduate student Trish Lowe is examining shorebird use of marshes with differing vegetative cover.

The Reserve, managed by the Department of Fish and Game in cooperation with

the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has provided a well-spring of research into natural history and management of the Elkhorn Slough system.

Concerted efforts to restore and enhance natural habitats in the Elkhorn Slough watershed are ongoing. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation is working with local agricultural interests to develop more environmentally-sound cultivation practices, and to expand habitat buffers above wetlands.

On the education front, in addition to the ongoing research and habitat work, a field-based education program on the Reserve provides a vital outdoor experience for over 10,000 students each year. Fifteen hundred teachers have been trained at the Reserve to use the slough as an environmental classroom, and quarterly workshops and enrichments are bringing in more of the educational community.

The coalition of public and private interests in the slough has been a cornerstone of program success. The non-profit Elkhorn Slough Foundation, working with The Nature Conservancy, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Coastal Conservancy, has mobilized volunteers to protect the slough and to reach out to the community. The Foundation is the vehicle for community support of slough programs and serves as a clearinghouse for activities in the watershed.

The Reserve has a visitor center and network of trails for public visitation. Checklists of bird species and of amphibians, reptiles and mammals, are available through the Foundation. In addition, The Elkhorn Slough Foundation publishes a tri-annual newsletter and has books, articles and other information on the slough. The Elkhorn Slough Foundation is a membership-supported organization. For more information, write ESF, P.O. Box 267, Moss Landing, CA 95039, or call (408) 728-5939.

Alan Baldrige, John Warriner and Mark Silberstein, Elkhorn Slough Foundation



Elkhorn Slough, a geological view

Panama Park in Jeopardy

Golden Gate Audubon has established a relationship with Panama Audubon and it is with great distress that we learn that the government there has decided to run a major connector road through the magnificent park in Panama City, effectively dividing the area and isolating half of the wildlife population from its major source of water. We have sent the following letter to the president of Panama.

Dr. Ernesto Perez Balladares
President of the Republic of Panama:

We write on behalf of nearly 6,000 members of the Audubon Society living in San Francisco, Berkeley, and neighboring cities of California, United States of America, to express great concern about plans for a road through the Parque Natural Metropolitano in Panama City.

We are concerned that the biological integrity of the Park as an intact tropical forest ecosystem will be irretrievably destroyed, with the loss of perhaps 25 percent of the forest habitat for birds and other animals and the isolation of the animals from their only permanent water source, the Rio Curundu. It appears that the road will frustrate the use of the Park for important research by the faculties of the National University and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. The opportunities for thousands of Panamanian school children to learn about their natural heritage in a Park in their most important urban area will be severely compromised.

We are concerned that decisions about the future of this unique natural resource so recently recovered by the people of Panama will be made in haste without the opportunity for meaningful participation by the people affected by the road and by destruction of wildlife habitat. The effective repeal of the wise law by which the people of Panama set aside the Park as a natural area sets a very unfortunate precedent, which in the future might encourage other projects destructive of important wildlife habitat. We fear that the consequent degradation of your forests and other natural areas, which are the most precious possession of the people of Panama, will be an enormous economic and spiritual loss for yourselves, your children and grandchildren.

The peoples of Panama and the United States of America, and the birds and other wildlife of our respective countries, are bound up together in the web of life. Please act to preserve this natural heritage.

Janice Andersen, President
Steven G. Margolin, Past President

Point of View: Pets and Wildlife

Alan Hopkins

LOVINGLY LEADING THEM TO SLAUGHTER

Unwittingly, animal lovers are responsible for the deaths of hundreds of millions of animals every year. Many people get a great deal of pleasure from having pets and love their animals as they would their own children, and yet, because of their negligence, 8 million cats and dogs are sent to their deaths in shelters each year in the U.S. As in a spell from the sorcerer's apprentice, our pets and their offspring are pouring uncontrolled from our homes into the streets and out into the wilds. Cat and dog overpopulation are now so extreme that the Humane Society of the United States called for a one year moratorium on all pet breeding in 1993. Besides the 8 million pets that die in shelters, another 1.5 million die in the streets (Harrison, 1992). The death toll really starts to skyrocket when the animals that survive the streets (very few of these are dogs) start to prey on wild animals.

Rich Stallcup of the Point Reyes Bird Observatory estimates that 4.4 million birds are killed by house cats every day (Stallcup, 1991). People would be outraged if someone was shooting birds in our yards and parks at that rate and yet we think nothing of letting our pets kill those same birds. Stallcup's figure of 4.4 million was just for cats that have homes. There are somewhere between 5 and 6 million feral cats in the U.S. killing wildlife.

A 1951 study by Carl Hubbs of feral cats in the Sacramento Valley may give us some insight on the mortality caused by these unwanted pets (Hubbs, 1951). Hubbs studied the stomach contents of 219 cats. In results averaged over a year, birds comprised 25.2% of total bulk, but what is most alarming is that the percentage shot up to approximately 80% in June. The reason for this rapid increase was obvious -- cats were preying on Ring-necked Pheasants and ducks as they sat on the nest or protected their still-flightless

young. Of the ten ducks taken, eight were hens and the majority of the 33 Ring-necked Pheasants were also hens. The other birds were: Green-backed Heron (1), California Quail (1), American Coot (8), Western Meadowlark (2), blackbirds (5) sparrows (8), unidentified birds (26), eggs (2).

Mammals made up the majority of the stomach contents of Hubbs' cats as would be expected. But there were some interesting findings. Mice and gophers and voles were the most common prey. Domestic rats were found only eight times, although they are common in the area. Rat control is frequently given as a reason for allowing cats to run wild, but this study found that 323 mammals, 37 of them rabbits, 97 birds, 13 reptiles and 7 fishes were eaten to control just 8 rats. Hubbs suggests that a cat's stomach contents may be passed in less than 12 hours. If we do some wild speculation and let the 498 vertebrates found in the stomachs of these cats represent one days hunting, this would make an annual projection at 181,770 vertebrates taken by 219 cats in one year. Now remember that there are 5 million feral cats in the U.S. depriving native predators, from hawks and owls to foxes and Mountain Lions, of food.

Most of our 50 million feral cats were not born in the wild; most are the outcasts and runaways from our homes, yards, and farms. As the human population expands into formerly rural and wilderness areas, people bring their pets with them, and with the cat population growing three times faster than the human population there are more cats killing more wildlife in formerly safe areas. In California, cat overpopulation is so extreme that in 1991, 541,410 cats were impounded of which 41,232 had to be killed. Californians paid more than \$100 million in taxes for animal control services the same year (Fund for Animals, 1993). Many animal control agencies are

understaffed and overwhelmed with the number of animals they must handle, so they can not possibly keep up with the animals encroaching into the state's wilds. One must feel sorry for the people who work for these agencies to protect animals, only to end up being a major executioner of them.

There are a large number of well-organized groups that attempt to reduce the number of cats killed in shelters; their solution, however, is to create "managed" colonies of unwanted cats. One group, Alley Cat Allies, suggests that, "Adult cats should be considered as candidates for relocation to a more rural, outdoor environment..." (Zukolski, 19??). These people are trapping cats in urban areas and setting them free in the wild! Although these groups claim to spay/neuter the cats in the colonies, this is not always the case. Richard Avanzino, President of the San Francisco SPCA, gives this profile of a colony and its care givers: "Mrs. S ...feeds 12 homeless cats... she has had four of the cats altered and hopes to alter more as funds permit." (Avanzino, 1993). According to Avanzino one unfixed female and her offspring can produce 150,000 cats in just seven years (Avanzino, 1989?). These cats will likely breed faster than Mrs. S. can have them fixed. *Shelter Sense* magazine (Lucas Donald, 1992) reports on a Universities Federation of Animal Welfare study of a cat colony with 100% fixed cats which sheds some light on these colonies: "Nine of the original 19 cats either disappeared or were euthanized because of illness, while 17 new cats entered the territory. This colony grew by eight cats despite the rather hasty deaths of almost half the original colony."

Most cat colonies are not this well managed. Mrs. T., a 78-year-old woman from rural Sonoma County, was encouraged to start a colony on her property. Although her initial group of cats had been spayed and neutered, their

numbers were soon added to by other cats that came to the free food. Mrs. T. soon had many litters of kittens from the new cats, and a \$300-a-month cat food expense she could not afford. Mrs. T.'s pleas to Forgotten Felines for help went unanswered. Out of desperation Mrs. T. called Sonoma Wildlife Rescue. The worker from SWR found many cats sick, some unable to breathe, others coughing up blood. Seventeen of the cats in this colony had the notched ears of cats that had been through a "Trap Alter Vaccinate and Release" program. Is it any wonder that Marc Paulhus, Humane Society of the United States' Vice-president for Companion Animals, states in *Shelter Sense*, "Neuter-and-release programs are misguided. They don't prevent the suffering of feral cats but instead extend and perpetuate it. They are half-hearted gestures that ensure, for all feral cats, terrifying lives and tragic deaths...we will see that for each survivor there are hundreds of small mammals and birds that die in the jaws of these self-sufficient feline predators." (Paulhus, 1992)

Many cat fanciers are under the mistaken impression that cats are part of nature; they believe in a kind of feline manifest destiny. This is revealed in statements made in the Alley Cat Allies newsletter *Alley Cat Action*, such as: "the cats and owls and all other living creatures should be allowed to survive in their own habitat." This is about a "victory" won at Florida Atlantic University where a colony of cats was allowed to remain even though they were found killing Burrowing Owls. Closer to home, organizations "concerned about cats, birds, and other park wildlife" have this bio babble to say about Golden Gate Park: "Cats, like all predators, have a built-in ecological intelligence which guides them to breed only up to carrying capacity of their environment" (Holton/Robinson, 1992). This statement may be true for Lions in Africa, but not for feral cats that are fed and watered by humans, and whose numbers are constantly being added to from outside populations. What is never mentioned by these people is, as David Taylor writes in *You and Your Cat*, "In the domestic cat, hunting isn't necessarily related to hunger; rather it's a

kind of sport or game." (Taylor 1986).

Alley Cat Allies is just one of many groups across the country encouraging people to start cat colonies; Forgotten Felines has attempted to stop the removal of the 100 or so cats from a campus of Sonoma State University, even though the cats have bitten three people, decimated the California Quail population, and use the campus day care sandbox as a litter box. Sonoma State officials have good reason to be concerned with the liability associated with having a cat colony on campus: rabies is now more common among cats than dogs. In most colonies, all the cats are fed from one or two bowls and, because rabies is spread through the saliva, the chance for the disease spreading is much greater. Although many of the cats have been inoculated at some point for rabies, they are rarely re-inoculated. Raccoons and skunks also frequent the cat food, and, even if all the cats have been inoculated, none of the other animals that use the bowls have been. This situation leads to the potential of one rabid wild animal infecting all the other wild animals that feed from the cat food bowls. A second health concern associated with these cats is toxoplasmosis. Passed in the stool, toxoplasmosis can cause abortions, stillbirths and infections of the fetus in pregnant women. In the US there are 4,500 babies born with toxoplasmosis annually; many of these children develop neurological impairments and some must be permanently institutionalized (Proulx, 1988). Toxoplasmosis can also be fatal to someone with AIDS. When cat colony "care givers" have colonies on public or private land the issue over who is liable for the harm these cats cause has yet to be decided.

Recently a great opportunity to turn the tide on cat over-population was dashed when the San Francisco SPCA attempted to force changes in State Assembly Bill 302. AB 302, or "Feline Fix Bill," would have made it mandatory that all outdoor cats be sterilized. Richard Avanzino of the S.F. SPCA began calling it the "Cat Killer Bill" when it was made clear that colonies would not be exempt from the provisions of the bill. Although AB 302 had no provision for, or funds

allocated to, trapping of feral cats, Avanzino claimed that the bill would "initiate 'round up and kill' campaigns." (Avanzino, 1993). He has also said of the Audubon Society, "It's difficult to understand how an organization that basically has a dedication to animals can target certain species for ethnic cleansing." (Hale, 1994).

As a result of these kinds of scare tactics, the fragile coalition of animal welfare, cat colony, and wildlife groups began to unravel. The Fund for Animals withdrew their sponsorship, and then Audubon was forced to withdraw its sponsorship of the bill when it was amended to please the cat colony people. As a result, the bill died. It is difficult to understand how the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals can let one overpopulated, non-native species cause the needless deaths of millions of animals of hundreds of species.

Those of us who have owned pets know what a special bond can develop between humans and animals. We must remember that cats and dogs have been domesticated by humans, and, like gasoline, our pets are basically natural but have been refined to suit human needs. When used properly both pets and petroleum can do a great deal to enhance our lives, but when misused both can cause irreparable damage to the environment.

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continued on page 65

News from around the Bay

PUBLIC SEASON ENDS AT ACR

Where did the time go? Audubon Canyon Ranch closes to the public on July 16. If you want to see our fledgling herons and egrets, you'll have to drop everything and race to Bolinas Lagoon. Next weekend, pack that picnic lunch, the binoculars and field guide and you're ready. The drive to the ranch is easy on Sir Francis Drake from the north and on Hwy. 1 from the south. Savor your visit since for most of us it will be our last chance to see the ranch until next March.

THANKS ONE AND ALL

We have an incredible group of volunteers! To those who spent a day hosting or a few weekends working as a ranch guide, thank you for making our public season a successful one. Thanks also to Ray Peterson and Edris Cole, our paid staff members who worked weekends and made sure that everything went smoothly. The ranch is no more than its volunteers and employees, and those very special people make ACR the marvelous success that it is.

DOCENT TRAINING AT BOUVERIE

Now is the time to check in if you are interested in joining the 1995 Docent Training Class at Bouverie Audubon Preserve. Training classes meet on Thursdays from September to February and are designed to provide new docents with the information and confidence needed to lead groups of elementary school students on nature walks at the preserve and to provide instruction in the classroom. Skills necessary for leading adult visitors on weekends will also be emphasized. An orientation session is scheduled for August 10. Please call (707) 938-4554 if you are interested in learning more about the docent training.

Dan Murphy

PRBO BIRD WALKS

Wildlife biologist David Cothran, Point Reyes Bird Observatory's new Director of Environmental Education, will lead a series of bird walks on the first Sunday of every month through December. Each walk will have a slightly different focus depending on the bird species in residence.

All walks will meet at Palomarin Field Station at 9:00 a.m. Take Highway 1 north to the Bolinas turnoff (the first left turn past the north end of Bolinas Lagoon -- there is **no** road sign marking this turn) and head south toward Bolinas. Turn left at the "T" intersection at Las Baulines Nursery and then take a right on Mesa Road (there's a stop sign at the intersection). Continue 4 miles to the Palomarin Field Station.

August 6	Newly-fledged juvenile birds at Palomarin
September 3	Sooty Shearwaters and Gull ID at Agate Beach
November 5	Winter residents at Palomarin
December 3	Shorebirds on the Bolinas Lagoon

For additional information, call (415) 868-1221, ext. 40.

SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON SEMINARS

The Sequoia Natural History Association presents a series of Spring/Summer Field Seminar Programs in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The outdoor program, designed for students, teachers, artists, and all those who are curious and adventuresome, features excursions, field trips and workshops which explore a variety of natural history topics. For additional information or a free seminar brochure, contact: Sequoia Natural History Association, HCR 89 - Box 10, Three Rivers, CA 93712, (209) 565-3759.

A TERRIBLE WETLANDS BILL

In June, an awful wetlands bill was introduced in the U.S. Senate. S.851 (Johnston) redefines wetlands in such a way that over 60% of California's wetlands, including tidal wetlands, would no longer be considered wetlands. It so alters existing wetlands regulations that, of those few wetlands still considered wetlands, all would be open to development. The "best quality" wetlands (however you define that ambiguous term -- best for development? best for birds? best for people?) will receive only the most meager protections, while all other wetlands will be up for destruction, often without any compensation required for that loss. It's a terrible bill, ranking right up there with the House's "Clean" Water Act that was discussed in the last *Gull*. Our only hope is that the Senate will stand strong for wetlands. Please write to our senators, particularly Senator Feinstein, and tell them to vote "no" on S.851 and to speak out against it on the Senate floor.

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Hart Senate Office Bldg., Rm. 331
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Barbara Boxer
Hart Senate Office Bldg., Rm. 112
Washington, DC 20510

You can also call President Clinton at (202) 456-1111, wait for an operator, and ask Clinton to veto S. 851 if it is passed by the legislature.

Arthur Feinstein

Point of View: Pets and Wildlife (cont. from page 64)

Conservation, 358-359
Stallcup, R., 1991, Cats: "A heavy toll on songbirds. A reversible catastrophe," *Point Reyes Bird Observatory Observer*, 91:8-9
Taylor, D. 1986, *You & Your Cat*, A.A. Knopf Inc. p. 11
Zukolski, J. 19??, "Fact sheet #2: Relocating feral cats," Alley Cat Allies literature.

Observations: May 6 - June 6

Daniel Singer

LOONS TO DUCKS

An **Arctic Loon**, discovered at Bodega Bay, SON, May 6, lingered until at least May 18 (AIW; BDP, JM, RS). This represents only the third record for the state, and the first for spring. The two previous records are from Nov. and Dec. 1991. Three Black-footed Albatrosses and a Laysan Albatross were seen during a fishing trip off Montara, SM, May 10 (PRa). Another influx of Fork-tailed Storm-petrels was noted mid-month with up to four off Pigeon Point, SM, May 16-18 (BS, PJM), and at least 12 in the Bodega Bay harbor area May 18 (RS). I particularly enjoyed watching one May 19 from Spud Point as it coursed back and forth over mud flats at low tide.

Pelagic Cormorants were discovered nesting off Pt. San Pablo, CC, April 19-May 9 (SGI) for a first nesting record for CC. This is unusually far inside S.F. Bay for this species, though Pelagic Cormorants were found nesting on the Bay Bridge in 1990 during the S.F. breeding bird atlas.

Up to 40 Greater White-fronted Geese visiting the Spaletta Plateau at Point Reyes, MRN, May 20-27 (RS, JM, NWb) were exceptionally late. There are numerous late spring and summer records for individuals and small groups throughout the region, but most wintering birds are gone by the end of March. The subspecific status of these geese was not resolved; this serves as a reminder that the field identification of subspecies is often easier said than done. The **Emperor Goose** at Bodega, SON, remained throughout the month, and looked quite comfortable at its new residence: a farm pond, complete with domestic mallards (m.ob.). A Blue-winged Teal near Leggett, MEN, June 4 (RJK) was a local rarity. Three Oldsquaws remained at Princeton Harbor, SM, through 5/29 (m.ob.) where they will likely summer given their apparent flightless condition.

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

A Broad-winged Hawk seen near

Pescadero, SM, May 29 (BMcK) is one of very few reports of a spring migrant in Northern California.

Reports of Sandhill Cranes include one at Bodega Bay from May 19- June 4 (BLw, m.ob.), one at the Marin headlands May 15 (AMF) and one at the Russian River mouth May 27 (LLu). These may pertain to the same individual.

A total of four Franklin's Gulls were seen at Pigeon Point this spring with, in addition to last month's, one on May 13 (SCR) and two May 16 (BS fide RSTh). Six at Lower Klamath May 28 (BY) were from an expected locale and where the species bred in 1989. The **Little Gull** in Alviso, SCL, was last reported May 11 (SBT). For the second year in a row a pair of Heermann's Gulls is nesting on Ano Nuevo Island, SM, with two eggs seen in the nest May 29 (fide RSTh). Common Terns were well reported from the SM and SF coasts (RSTh, ASH, ToC) with nine between May 14-25. A Black Skimmer returned this year to the South Bay where one was at Charleston Slough, SCL, May 8-16 (m.ob.); another provided a first record for Contra Costa at Brooks Island May 9-13 (SGI, JMR); and a third was on the SM coast May 17-18 (BS fide RSTh). Two Tufted Puffins from Pigeon Point, SM May 27 (PSr) keep hopes alive that this species may be breeding nearby.

OWLS TO GOLDFINCHES

A **Barred Owl** along Skaggs Springs Road near Stewarts Point, SON, May 26 (DN) was the southernmost record for the state and a county first.

An immature male Costa's Hummingbird in SCL at Palo Alto May 11-21 was thought to be a post-breeding wanderer (SCR, m.ob.). The San Mateo Breeding Bird Atlas struck gold with the discovery of a pair of nesting Red-breasted Sapsuckers along Butano Creek May 26 (BMcK). This species nests in the outer Coastal Range south to northern Sonoma County, with occasional breeding in the Olema Valley of Marin.

An amazing 39 Hammond's

Flycatchers were observed south of Del Valle Reservoir, ALA, on private property May 13 (MMR)! This species was well-reported throughout the month and included several along the coast in SF and SM. Considerably rarer on the coast in spring was a Dusky Flycatcher in SF May 14 (DSg).

A Gray Jay at the Gualala River Reg. Park, SON, May 26-27 (fide DN, LLu) was thought to be a first for SON. A female Mountain Bluebird at the bottom of Del Puerto Canyon, STA, May 29 was remarkably late (GFB). At the same time a large movement of Swainson's Thrushes was occurring along coastal MTY May 19, a **Veery** was found at the Moon Glow Dairy in Moss Landing (DR). This species is one of our rarest vagrants and records are treated cautiously by the CBRC. A Gray Catbird was north of Lee Vining, MON, June 5 (PJM).

Vagrant warblers were few and far between and included just eight individuals of seven species, which suggests it may be a poor season for these attractive visitors. As is often the case in spring, many were singing males: a Tennessee Warbler was at the end of Lewis Ave. in El Granada, SM June 2-3 (BS, RSTh); a Northern Parula was at the Lighthouse, Point Reyes, May 31- June 2; a male Black-throated Blue Warbler was seen briefly at Lincoln Park, SF, May 28 (ASH); a **Yellow-throated Warbler** at the Mendoza ranch trees, PRNS, May 31-June 4, was identified by ear as the observer drove by (RS, JM, m.ob.); a rare-in-spring Blackpoll was at Pescadero May 29 (RSTh); an American Redstart was at San Andreas Lake, SM, June 1 (ADeM) and Hooded Warblers were at Pescadero May 12-13 (RSTh; SCR) and Hayward, ALA May 15 (SGI).

A singing male Summer Tanager at Las Trampas Regional Wilderness, CC, May 27 (BoB) was inland where records are few. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were at San Jose, SCL, May 27 (SCR) and near Pescadero June 2 (TNwb). A male Indigo

Bunting returned for the second year in a row to Lichau Road in Rohnert Park, SON, May 8-11 (DN; DSh), while two others were at Pescadero May 29 and Half Moon Bay, SM, June 4 (both RSTh). A Clay-colored Sparrow at Mussel Rock, Daly City, SM, May 28 (DSg) was an unusual sight in spring. A Brewer's Sparrow near Half Moon Bay May 20 (RSTh) was the only one reported. The last report of White-throated Sparrow was one at Strybing Arboretum, SF May 6 (JM).

The Great-tailed Grackle, in Alviso since April 28, was last seen May 7 (SBT, SCR), though one at Hayward May 15 (RJR) was suspected of being the same bird. Another was seen from I-5 in SJ as it flew across the road (ADeM).

The monthly observation column is generated from reports made to the Northern California Bird Box or to the author. Some sightings are unconfirmed and numbers of birds are often best regarded as estimates or "best guesses". In general, birds in boldface are very rare in our region, geographically or seasonally. Many of these are currently reviewed by the California Bird Records Committee (CBRC). Observers are encouraged to provide written and/or photographic documentation to the CBRC, c/o Michael Patten, P.O. Box 51959, Riverside, CA 92517-2959 for any species currently on the review list. A list of review species can also be obtained from the CBRC secretary at the address above.

Observers: Florence G. Bennett, George Bing, Bob Brandriff, Rita Carratello, Les Chibana, Tom Condit, Chris Corben, Al DeMartini, Al Eisner, George Finger, Allen Fish, Steve Glover, Ed Greaves, Steve Hampton, Keith Hansen, Kevin Hints, David Hofmann, Alan Hopkins, Robert Keiffer, Bob Lewis, Leslie Lieurance, Bert McKee, Peter Metropulos, Joe Morlan, Dan Nelson, Todd Newberry, Benjamin D. Parmeter, David Powell, Peter Radcliff, Bob Reiling, Bob Richmond, Don Roberson, Mike Rogers, Steve Rottenborn, Paul Sarassini, Barry Sauppe, Doug Shaw, Dianne Sierra (DSi), Dan Singer (DSg), Rich Stallcup, Scott Terrill, Ron Thorn, Alan Wight (AlW), Anna Wilcox (AWi), Bob Yutzy.

Data thanks to Joe Morlan and the Northern California Bird Box.

Abbreviations for counties: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; MRN, Marin; MEN, Mendocino; MON, Mono; MTY, Monterey; SF, San Francisco; SJ, San Joaquin; SM, San Mateo; SCL, Santa Clara; SON, Sonoma; STA, Stanislaus.

Back Yard Birder

Meg Pauletich

After 25 1/2 years in the same house, my yard has changed a great deal. Some trees have matured, others have been removed. A year ago, we re-landscaped the front entry area. I guess like any piece of nature, a yard is in a constant state of change. Along with these changes, the habitats available to birds have been in a state of flux. Still, I've had basically the same kinds of birds throughout the years with only the numbers of species changing. It's the unexpected visitors which give me a rush. If only I could have a guest book for them to sign as they pass through! Or maybe a surveillance camera scanning all points, along with a tape recording since unfamiliar calls and sounds are my first clues to strangers. Think of the birds I've missed! Surely my yard list would be more than the 68-or-so species I have recorded.

Last week I was looking out my kitchen window as I washed a pan. Dick was watching the feeder activity in the weeping cherry from the other window. "Hey! Some kind of woodpecker with red on his head flew into the cherry tree!"

Just then the bird swooped out and up into a live oak. An Acorn Woodpecker, a first for our yard! I hoped he was scouting the neighborhood. Maybe he'll like the neighbor's valley oak -- it's bigger with more cavities for nesting. During the annual Christmas count, we've noticed some Acorn Woodpecker colonies waning while others seem to flourish, all because of the number of starlings around. No starlings in my area yet, so maybe ...

When we first built our home, I was a novice at bird watching. Curiosity made me take a class. I just had to know what bird was making that insect-like "scree" in my chapparal (Rufous-sided Towhee). And how about that bouncing ping-pong ball sound along with a sound like peeping baby chicks (Wrentits, male and female). It seemed years before I actually saw a Wrentit, and once I did I could lure them in with pishing noises while I was watering.

This is the first year for a White-throated Sparrow and Slate-colored Junco at my winter feeder. The Pacific Slope

(nee Western) Flycatcher has been a spring nester for only about 8 years, presumably because it took years for a moist, woodsy habitat to develop. I may have bats, but no swallows. I go years between nuthatch sightings, both White-breasted and Red-breasted. And yet neighbors down the hill have them in abundance. Only once have I seen a Northern Oriole, and he was just flying by my deck. (On my yard list, I have included birds flying over, such as geese, hawks and crows.) We used to have up to 30 quail at a time; their numbers are down, probably because of neighborhood cats. (When we moved in, there were only three other houses.) There was a Red-breasted Sapsucker which loved our willow tree so much it killed the tree!

Now you can see that I am in fact a true back yard birder, along with being an occasional bird seeker in "foreign" territory. It's just as much fun any place you choose!

JOBS VS. ENVIRONMENT: GOOD NEWS

The following is reprinted from Scientific American, June 1995

The perceived conflict between jobs and the environment has received yet another dose of reality. Economist Eban S. Goodstein of Skidmore College and the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, DC, recently published a study tracking jobs lost due to various causes. Using Labor Dept. statistics for the period from 1987-1990, supplied by employers' own estimates, he found that only 0.1% of lay-offs were the result of environmental regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act or the Clean Air Act. Changes in a company's ownership, on the other hand, accounted for almost 35 times as many lost jobs during the same period... Many sources cite many horrific anecdotes about loss of jobs due to "environmental regulations," but it seems that these anecdotes account for only a minuscule fraction of actual layoffs. Hopefully the Congress and other decision-makers can use these data to justify a strong Endangered Species Act, which is facing a tough reauthorization battle this summer.

Field Trips Calendar

Thursday-Sunday, July 6-9

**Backpacking trip to Snag Lake in Lassen
Volcanic National Park**

Leaders: David (510) 527-7210 and Robin Pulich

Saturday-Sunday, July 29-30

Yosemite Alpine Ecology Hiking Trip

This annual trip to the High Sierra is by reservation only, and the number of participants will be strictly limited. For reservation and meeting details, call: George Peyton (leader), (510) 444-3131 (weekdays).

For details on the above trips, see *The Gull* for June

Saturday, July 22

Golden Gate Park (east end)

Meet at 8 a.m. at the Dahlia Garden, located 100 feet east of the Conservatory building. During this morning walk, we will concentrate on the live-oak habitat looking for summer residents. Lunch is optional for those who wish to stay. Beginners welcome. Leader: Mike Healy (415) 664-3654 (h) or (415) 495-6320 (w).

Saturday, September 9

Coastal San Francisco

Meet at 8 a.m. at the parking lot between South and Middle lakes (Chain of Lakes) near the 41st Avenue and Lincoln Way entrance to Golden Gate Park. We will bird in the park, Lake Merced, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in search of warblers, flycatchers and vagrants. Bring your lunch and be prepared for cold weather near the coast. Leader: Dan Murphy (415) 564-0074. (*)

Wednesday, September 13

**Mini-trip to Alameda South Shore and
surrounding areas**

Meet at 9 a.m. in Alameda at Broadway and Shoreline Dr. We will be looking for shorebirds and waterfowl. Bring lunch and a scope if you have one. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (*).

Problems: if you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chair (510) 524-2399.

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**Northern California Bird Box
(510) 524-5592**

**Weekly Rare Bird Summary
(415) 738-1499**

5 species of loon have been seen in California

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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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